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SUBJECT: UN MISSION IN LIBERIA: SECURITY COUNCIL
CONSULTATIONS, MARCH 19, 2009

11. (U) The Security Council will hold consultations on Liberia on March 19, 2009. USUN may draw on the talking points in paragraph 3 for the U.S. delegation's remarks.

12. (SBU) SRSB Loej will brief on the recommendations on drawdown of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) contained in the February 10, 2009 Secretary-General's report. As USUN is aware, the UK and French missions pressed hard for accelerated drawdown when UNMIL's mandate was last renewed. UNSCR 1836 of September 29, 2008 called for a review of the drawdown proposal, measured against benchmarks of progress, in the February 2009 report. The review concluded that the security situation remains volatile and that the Liberian government and institutions are not yet able to assume full responsibility. The SYG recommended that the current drawdown plan remain in force, with no acceleration in the pace of drawdown. The U.S. fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendations, which were based on the well-informed and thorough review of the situation on the ground by SRSB Loej and her military, political and civilian advisors.

13. (U) Begin talking points:

-- The historical, long-standing ties between Liberia and the United States are well-known, and cherished by both countries. We are proud to be Liberia's partner.

-- In U.S. Fiscal Year 2008 our assessed share of UNMIL's costs was \$155 million.

-- To date, the U.S. has invested around \$215 million in helping Liberia to build its new Armed Forces. American funds have trained 2,000 soldiers, building not only Liberia's capacity to address security threats, but also promoting civilian direction and respect for human rights.

-- We have also worked to build capacity at the Ministry of Defense, down to the most basic units of management. We provide funding for contract and military trainers/advisors, equipment and supplies, and infrastructure construction and repair.

-- The U.S. supports police programs for Liberia through UNMIL, and we are currently developing a more robust bilateral program for near-term implementation.

-- The international community has responded more than once to crises in Liberia that have affected stability throughout the entire sub-region. The U.S. believes that a careful, steady approach to helping Liberians rebuild their institutions and lay a solid foundation for the future is a prudent investment.

-- The U.S. appreciates the detailed and careful recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on adjusting and refining the benchmarks for progress used to measure UNMIL drawdown. These are clear and reasonable goals, using concrete technical and legislative actions to mark progress. We strongly support the recommendations outlined in the report.

-- We thank Ambassador Loej for her briefing. She and her staff have provided the Secretary-General with a well-informed and thorough review of the situation on the ground.

-- We would like to note with appreciation the continuing cooperation between UNMIL and the Government of Liberia on issues related to protecting women against violence and abuse.

--The United States applauds the hard work, in difficult circumstances, that UNMIL accomplishes every day to assist the people and country of Liberia. We praise the leadership of SRSJ Loej and thank her and her team for their steadfast commitment.

Begin Questions:

-- The U.S. is concerned about continuing violent demonstrations by ex-combatants arising from misunderstandings over benefits. Could Ambassador Loej describe what the Liberian Government is doing to better communicate the facts to ex-combatants, and how UNMIL could help?

-- We also note that the report expressed concern about cross-border drug trafficking, with implications for increased activity by organized crime networks and a risk of a resumed substantial flow of light weapons. Have UNMIL's joint patrols with the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) or exercises and liaison with the Sierra Leonean authorities revealed any substantial evidence of increased arms trafficking in the sub-region?

End Questions.
CLINTON